

of Rome himself, Romulus and his twin brother Remus, as begotten by the god Mars on a Vestal Virgin;¹ and every Roman who accepted the tradition thereby acknowledged the fatherhood of the god in the physical, not in a figurative, sense of the word. If the story of the birth of Romulus and Remus should be dismissed as a late product of the mythical fancy working under Greek influence, the same objection can hardly be urged against the story of the birth of another Roman king, Servius Tullius, who is said to have been a son of the fire-god and a slave woman; his mother conceived him beside the royal hearth, where she was impregnated by a flame that shot out from the fire in the shape of the male organ of generation.²

It would scarcely be possible to express the physical fatherhood of the fire-god in more unambiguous terms. Now a precisely similar story was told of the birth of Romulus himself;³ and we may suspect that this was an older form of the story than the legend which fathered the twins on Mars. Similarly, Caeculus, the founder of Praeneste, passed for a son of the fire-god Vulcan. It was said that his mother was impregnated by a spark which leaped from the fire and struck her as she sat by the hearth. In later life, when Caeculus boasted of his divine parentage to a crowd, and they refused to believe him, he prayed to his father to give the unbelievers a sign, and straightway a lambent flame surrounded the whole multitude. The proof was conclusive, and henceforth Caeculus passed for a true son of the fire-god.⁴ Such tales of kings or heroes begotten by the fire-god on mortal women appear to be genuine old Italian myths, which may well go back far beyond the foundation of Rome to the common fountain of Aryan mythology; for the marriage customs observed by various branches of the Aryan family point clearly to a belief in the power of fire to impregnate women.⁵

On the whole, if we follow the authority of the ancients we must ourselves, we seem bound to conclude that the Roman gods, ^{the} like those of many other early peoples, were

believed to be Roman
 married and to beget children. It is true
 that, compared gods were
 with the full-blooded gods of Greece, the
 deities of Rome ^^.^
 appear to us shadowy creatures, pale abstractions garbed
 in little ^{anc}_i to
 that can vie with the gorgeous pall of myth and story which
 Grecian beget
 fancy threw around its divine creations. Yet the few
 specimens of ^{children_}
 Roman mythology which have survived the wreck of
 antiquity⁶

¹ Livy, i. 4. 2 ; Plutarch, *Romulus* > ⁴ Servius, on Virgil, *Am.* vii.
 678.

4 ; Dionysius Halicarnasensis, *Anti-* ⁵ *The Magic Art and the*
Evolution
quit. Roman, i. 77. *of Kings*, ii. 230 *sq.*

² Sec 77/6- *Magic Art and the Evolu-* ⁶ Such, for example, as the
 loves of

tion of Kings i ii. 195 *sq** Vertumnus for Pomona (Ovid, *Metam.*
³ Plutarch, *Romuhts*, 2. Plutarch's xiv. 623 *sqq**)> of Jupiter for

Juturna
 authority was Promathion in his history (Ovid, *Fasti*, ii. 5^5
 •&?'<?•)» ^{and} of

of Italy. See *The Magic Art and tlie* Janus for Carna (Ovid, *Fasti*,
 vi. 101

Evolution offa'tigs, ii. 196. *sqq.*) and for Camasene (Servius, on